

Message Text

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PAGE 01 LUSAKA 03053 081251Z
ACTION SS-25

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INFO AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM
AMEMBASSY GABORONE
AMEMBASSY LAGOS
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MAPUTO
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C O N F I D E N T I A L LUSAKA 3053

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PDEV RH U& UK
SUBJ: THE NKOMO OPTION

REF: (A) LUSAKA 3049, (B) MAPUTO 1219

1. IT IS NOT EASY TO SEPARATE FACT FROM FICTION IN THE
PERSISTENT RUMORS THAT THE SMITH-KAUNDA MEETING WAS IN SOME
WAY RELATED TO A MOVE TO WORK OUT AN ARRANGEMENT TO INSTALL
JOSHUA NKOMO AS THE LEADER OF AN INDEPENDENT ZIMBABWE. REPRE-
SENTATIVES OF THE WESTERN PRESS AND DIPLOMATIC CORP IN LUSAKA,
ALONG WITH ZANU (MAPUTO REFTEL) AND MUZOREWA SUPPORTERS, ARE
HIGHTY SUSPICIOUS THAT SUCH A THING MAY HAVE OCCURRED.
SOCIALIST REPRESENTATIVES ARE, IN SOME CASES, FRANTICALLY
TRYING TO DISCOVER WHAT TRANSPIRED.

2. WE KNOW THE FOLLOWING FACTUAL ELEMENTS:
--JOSHUA NKOMO WAS IN LUSAKA DURING THE VISIT;
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--WE ARE TOLD HE WAS INFORMED OF SMITH'S ARRIVAL AND ASKED TO
MAKE HIMSELF AVAILABLE IN CASE HE WAS NEEDED;
--THERE HAS BEEN FIRM AND, WE BELIEVE, RELIABLE DENIAL THAT
SMITH SAW NKOMO;
--MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS PHIRI ASSURED ME THAT THERE WAS NO
DISCUSSION OF NKOMO OR THE PF DURING THE CONVERSATIONS IN WHICH
HE PARTICIPATED;

--THE BOTSWANAN AMBASSADOR, WHOM I BELIEVE TO BE QUITE RELIABLE, TOLD ME HE SPECIFICALLY ASKED PRESIDENT KAUNDA WHETHER THERE HAD BEEN ANY DISCUSSION OF THE PF ROLE OR OF JOSHUA NKOMO AND THAT KAUNDA ASSURED HIM THERE HAD NOT BEEN.

3. ON THE OTHER HAND, PUNABANTU'S STATEMENTS TO WESTERN PRESS REPRESENTATIVES (LUSAKA REFTEL) STIMULATED SPECULATION THAT SOMETHING OCCURRED WHICH HAS ENCOURAGED THE ZAMBIANS TO FOCUS MORE STRONGLY ON NKOMO. A PRIVATE AMERICAN WHO IS FULLY CONVERSANT WITH THE POLITICAL SITUATION IN SOUTHERN AFRICA MET WITH KAUNDA ON FRIDAY NIGHT. HIS REPORT OF THE CONVERSATION THROWS SOME FURTHER LIGHT ON IT. THE AMERICAN, WHO IS PARTISAN TO NKOMO, SAID THAT KAUNDA REPORTED SMITH AS HAVING DEPRECATED BOTH MUZOREWA AND SITHOLE. KAUNDA BELIEVED SMITH HAD COME WITH THE HOPE OF RECEIVING BACKING FOR AN INTERNAL OPTION, BUT AS THE CONVERSATION PROCEEDED, ACKNOWLEDGED THAT SUCH AN OPTION WAS IMPOSSIBLE BECAUSE NEITHER MUZOREWA NOR SITHOLE WAS ADEQUATE TO THE JOB OR COULD END THE WAR. THEY BOTH AGREED THAT NO ONE WHO SAID ONE THING PRIVATELY AND ANOTHER IN PUBLIC COULD REALLY BE RELIED ON AS A FUTURE LEADER OF THE COUNTRY. FURTHERMORE, KAUNDA SAID SMITH INSISTED THAT WHAT ZIMBABWE NEEDED MOST WAS A STRONG LEADER. SMITH ASKED TO SEE NKOMO BUT KAUNDA REFUSED TO PERMIT THIS, SAYING TO SMITH THAT HE HAD COME TO LUSAKA TO MEET WITH KAUNDA, NOT NATIONALIST LEADERS.

4. THE AMERICAN REFLECTED A VIEW WHICH HE SAID HE HAD GOTTEN CONFIDENTIAL

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FROM BOTH KAUNDA AND MARK CHONA, THAT FREE ELECTIONS IN ZIMBABWE WOULD LEAD TO CIVIL WAR. THE ONLY POSSIBILITY OF A PEACEFUL SOLUTION WOULD BE SOME KIND OF A PRE-AGREED SOLUTION TO GIVE THE PF PREPONDERANT POWER. FREE ELECTIONS ARE A WESTERN IMPOSED MECHANISM WHICH IS FOREIGN TO AFRICA AND HAS NOT WORKED HERE. IN ZIMBABWE IT COULD LEAD TO A COALITION WHICH WAS A RECIPE FOR CHAOS. AFRICANS STILL ACCEPT THE IDEA OF THE IMPOSED CHIEF WHO SERVES FOR LIFE, I.E., THE FRELIMO SOLUTION. IF SMITH WAS REALLY SERIOUS ABOUT WANTING A SOLUTION, AND THE AMERICAN SAID KAUNDA BELIEVES THAT SMITH'S MILITARY HAVE NOW MADE IT CLEAR TO HIM THAT HE MUST FIND ONE BEFORE LONG, THEN HE WILL SEEK AN AGREEMENT NOT WITH MUZOREWA OR SITHOLE, WHICH COULD NOT END THE WAR, BUT WITH NKOMO BECAUSE HE KNOWS THIS IS THE ONLY WAY TO BRING A PEACEFUL AND ORDERLY SETTLEMENT TO RHODESIA.

5. SUBSEQUENTLY, THE AMERICAN DISCUSSED THE SAME MATTER WITH PRIME MINISTER MAINZA CHONA, WHO LED HIM TO MODIFY HIS ASSESSMENT OF THE ZAMBIAN POSITION. ZAMBIANS, THE AMERICAN SAID, DO NOT OPPOSE ELECTIONS BUT SEE THEM AS CONFIRMING AN AGREEMENT ON PF LEADERSHIP THAT RESULTED FROM A MERGER MEETING OF THE TWO AND RECOGNITION BY FRONTLINE AND OTHER OUTSIDE POWERS THAT THE

PF SHOULD BE ENTRUSTED WITH FUTURE LEADERSHIP OF ZIMBABWE.

6. COMMENT: AS WE PROCEED TOWARDS A SETTLEMENT ALONG THE LINES
OF OUR PROPOSAL, ALTERNATIVE SOLUTIONS STIMULATED BY THE VERY
PROGRESS OF OUR INITIATIVE MAY ARISE. WE SHOULD KEEP AN EYE
ON THESE.
LOW

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